

*** TRANSCRIPT ***

Local businesses open arms to dogs in need this Valentine's Day

Podcast interview with Eric Neumann, Co-owner of Camp Bow Wow in Columbia, Md.; and Janelle Kozyra, member of the Kimco Realty blogging team

Janelle: Today we are joined by Eric Neumann, who is the Co-owner of Camp Bow Wow in Columbia, Md. He is organizing a special event around Valentine's Day this year, called the Cupids and Canines Adopt-a-Thon. It's happening on Saturday, Feb. 9 in Kimco's Enchanted Forest shopping center in Ellicott City, Md. It is sponsored by one of the tenants there, the Petco Foundation, and Eric and Camp Bow Wow are helping to organize it. So Eric, it's great to have you with us. Thanks for joining.

Eric: It's my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Janelle: So tell us a little bit of background first on Camp Bow Wow so we have a sense of what Camp Bow Wow is and what they do.

Eric: Camp Bow Wow is a national franchise based out of Colorado. There are 120 camps around the country and we are a dog boarding, dog day camp, where dogs can romp, play, socialize, and interact with other dogs all day long. They have indoor and outdoor access, and we're web-enabled so you can log on from home, work, and even your iPhone.

Janelle: And let's talk about the Cupids and Canines event that is going on this weekend, and everyone who's involved. So tell us about the adopt-a-thon.

Eric: So it's a canine event. It's actually the fifth year that we've been doing this, and all the camps around the country are participating as well. It's a national event, and it's an event where we can make awareness to the importance of finding forever homes for dogs in need.

We started off five years ago in Columbia, Md. We had four rescue groups, maybe 20 participants, and now we're up to 23 rescuers and lots of vendors and a huge venue because of Kimco, and we are very excited to hopefully find forever homes for dogs in need.

Howard County businesses, this wouldn't be possible without them, simply because of the donations that they've made. So we're having raffles and 50-50s. We're having games, like a spinning wheel where you can win a prize, and Plinko, where you drop the chip and it falls down the pegs and you land on a prize, right down to where Olive Garden donated \$5 gift certificates to a golf outing for four.

Of course we have the Petco Foundation who's donating a gift basket \$150. And I don't know if you're familiar with Sherry Kendall from Wagging Tail Portraits. She was actually recognized as Oprah's best item of the year on her Christmas episode, and she's donating a 16x16 hand-painted portrait valued at over \$750.

There's a restaurant called the Jilly's Pub that has incredibly graciously donated a box lunch to all of the rescue participants. Jilly's Pub is also going to be selling those box lunches at the event and then of course those proceeds are also going to the Bow Wow Foundation. So, so many items from the

community that we're going to be raffling off and generating money, and all the proceeds are going to the Bow Wow Buddies Foundation.

We're also conducting efforts for the Sandy relief fund in New Jersey. We have been collecting food items from wet food to dry food and dog treats. If you come to the event and you mention that you're interested in participating with the Sandy relief, we'll send you over to Petco across the parking lot. And for every purchase you make, you tell the cashier that it's for the Sandy relief fund for the Cupids and Canines event, and there will be 10 percent off your purchase and you can even make that donation for the relief in New Jersey.

Janelle: How many dogs are you going to have up for adoption at this year's event?

Eric: Well, we have 23 rescue groups. We did ask them to limit the dogs they bring to three dogs each, so if everybody brings three dogs, we could have quite a few dogs. So I would imagine 50+ dogs will be there.

Janelle: What's your goal? Are you hoping to adopt them all? Of course ideally, but do you have any other goals for the event?

Eric: The goal is to find as many forever homes as possible. But it's also the awareness, so how people can think twice before they purchase a dog from a breeder. There are so many dogs that need homes. The alternative, if they don't find forever homes, is just not acceptable.

So our goal is to get awareness out there that there is a need for dogs that are hidden in shelters that are not in healthy, good conditions at the moment. Or maybe their foster homes have wonderful conditions, but they can't be their forever home. It's awareness and finding forever homes that are the #1 goals.

Janelle: And how did the idea for the adopt-a-thon come about?

Eric: It started from corporate, being a national franchise. Heidi, who is the owner of Camp Bow Wow, is just completely and utterly passionate about dogs and animals in general, and making sure that everything she can possibly do to better the life for animals is taken care of. This was a way she thought she could do it, especially getting the national recognition of the camps around the country. What better way to bring awareness for dogs that need to be adopted?

Janelle: So are there adopt-a-thons going on in other locations?

Eric: Yes, there are definitely adopt-a-thons going on in other locations throughout the month of February, being a Cupids and Canines event, being around Valentine's Day, and finding true love. Other camps around the country are doing the exact same thing we are, having dogs of all sizes, all breeds, in their lobby of their location or in other venues like we're doing with Kimco.

Janelle: And why did you select Enchanted Forest as a location for the adopt-a-thon this year?

Eric: Well we reached out to Kimco, because Kimco is obviously a very highly known and recognized realty group, and it's very well known in Howard County. We grew out of our space. We originally did it

in our lobby, and we had the event in a mall setting at one point, and we grew out of that space and we needed a larger venue.

So we reached out to Kimco and Enchanted Forest happened to have a location that was available. And it has incredible visibility, foot traffic, Petco, Safeway, the post office. On a Saturday morning, these are places people are going to and they're going to walk right past us. We're going to have signage out encouraging people to come in and see our event.

Janelle: Tell us about how you are promoting the event and trying to raise awareness for it.

Eric: Well we're promoting the event first of all with social media. Facebook has been an incredible asset. We have flyers throughout the town. Everywhere you turn, if it's a dog-related facility or not a dog-related facility, there are flyers on their bulletin boards. Petco, for instance, we have flyers that are going in every bag for every person who shops at the facility. Coffee shops, you name it, they have our flyer.

Simple word-of-mouth, and of course our newsletter, which goes out to a couple thousand people. And each and every rescue group, which of course did not charge for the event. So the only thing we ask is that you market and you spread the word. So on their website, on their social media, and just word-of-mouth, we're getting the word around.

Janelle: What sort of turnout are expecting on Saturday?

Eric: We're expecting a couple hundred people to come through. Between the marketing efforts we have done, and the foot traffic that we're going to have with people shopping and going to the post office and Petco, and drawing them in. Simply their curiosity alone will get them in the door, so it could be a huge event, I believe, with a few hundred people.

Janelle: Great. Well it's been great talking with you, Eric, and we wish you the best of luck on Saturday and hope that a lot of these dogs find new homes.

Eric: Thank you very much.